

2 Corinthians 2:12-17 “Just Diffuse His Sweet Fragrance”

- Starting in **2:14** to **7:5** Paul reserves these pages of his letter to share some of the greatest challenges and triumphs of his ministry.
 - Some suggest a separate letter inserted here – not much basis for this

12 Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord,

13 I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia.

- **Doors of ministry**

- **They open**

Acts 16:8-10

8 So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.

9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.”

10 Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, **concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.**

1 Corinthians 16:8-9

8 But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost.

9 For a great and effective door has opened to me, **and there are many adversaries.**

Colossians 4:2-4

2 Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;

3 meanwhile praying also for us, **that God would open to us a door for the Word,** to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains,

4 that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

- **They shut – it just better not be you that's responsible for shutting it!**

Matthew 25:24-30

24 “Then he who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed.

25 And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, *there* you have *what is yours.*’

26 “But his lord answered and said to him, ‘You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed.

27 So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest.

28 So take the talent from him, and give *it* to him who has ten talents.

29 **‘For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.**

30 And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

- **So, a door has opened – how do you know if Christ is in it?**

- **Look at the next verse: (2:14)**

- **Triumph happens**

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

- **Sacrificial supernatural things happen**

- People pray
- People pray and fast
- People hear the Word and the Spirit

- **Its God who does it:**

- Leads us in triumph
- Causes us to be the fragrance of Christ no matter where we go

14 Now thanks be to God who **always** leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.

- **Thanks be to God:** *"To stand by the shadows of a friendly tree with the wind tugging at your coattail and the heavens hailing your heart, to gaze and glory and to give oneself again to God, what more could a man ask? Oh, the fullness, pleasure, sheer excitement of knowing God on earth. I care not if I never raise my voice again for Him, if only I may love Him, please Him."*
-- Jim Elliot in The Journals of Jim Elliot.

- **Sweet perfume unto the Lord – supernatural sacrifice**

John 12:1-3

1 Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead.

2 There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him.

3 Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. **And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.**

spike•nard \noun

[Middle English, from Middle French or Medieval Latin; Middle French *spicanarde*, from Medieval Latin *spica nardi*, literally, **spike of nard**]

1 a : a fragrant ointment of the ancients

b : **a Himalayan aromatic plant** (*Nardostachys jatamansi*) of the valerian family from which spikenard is believed to have been derived ¹

¹Merriam-Webster, I. (1996, c1993). *Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary*. Includes index. (10th ed.). Springfield, Mass., U.S.A.: Merriam-Webster.

- **Jesus' gift to us is a sweet smelling sacrifice to the Lord**

- **Imitate Jesus – give as He gave**

Ephesians 5:1-2

1 Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.

2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, **an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.**

- **Our gifts and ministry to each other is a sweet smelling aroma to the Lord**

Philippians 4:18-19

18 Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, **a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.**

19 And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

- **Our prayers are as sweet smelling incense to the Lord**

Psalms 141:2 **Let my prayer be set before You as incense,**

The lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.

Revelation 5:8 Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and **golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.**

Revelation 8:3-5

3 Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer *it* with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

4 **And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand.**

5 Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw *it* to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake.

- **What is it about a perfume that attracts us?**

- **Appealing** – can the gospel be appealing?
- **Mysterious** – can the gospel be mysterious?
- **Enhancing** – can make an old horse seem much younger – doesn't the gospel bring an intrigue to a new acquaintance?

1 Peter 3:3-5

3 **Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel—**

4 rather *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.

5 **For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves,** being submissive to their own husbands,

- **Who are these people that say these things?**

- Thanks be to God who always leads us (v14)

- Count it all joy (James 1:2-4)
- the privilege of **suffering** for him. (Col. 1:29)
- Joyful are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake

Matthew 5:10-12

10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.

12 Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

15 For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.

16 To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things?

- The Gospel preached always leads to decisions in those who hear:
 - **Being saved** – the aroma of life leading to eternal life
 - **Perishing** – the aroma of death leading to eternal death

• **The Gospel – that powerful? Who can handle that?**

2 Corinthians 3:5-6

5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as *being* from ourselves, but our sufficiency *is* from God,

6 who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

17 For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.

- Many false peddlers of the Gospel in those days

2 Corinthians 1:12 For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world **in simplicity and godly sincerity**, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you.

2 Peter 2:1-3

1 But there were also **false prophets among the people**, even as there will be **false teachers among you**, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction.

2 And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.

3 **By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words**; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.